

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action dated June 30, 2005, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 18-20. The indication that claims 4, 5 and 28-30 remain allowed is noted with appreciation.

Claim 18 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103, on the basis of the Hamamura et al published application (US2003/0133021), in view of the Kodama reference (JP09-261526) and the Nakagawa patent (U.S. 5,335,016). Briefly, the Hamamura publication was cited as disclosing the ability to detect whether the luminance of an object will result in an exposure time that is greater than a predetermined limit. The Kodama reference was cited as disclosing the concept of taking multiple exposures of the same scene, based on the amount of hand shake, and compositing the images to form a single image. The Nakagawa patent was cited as disclosing the concept of compressing images before storing them in memory.

While the Nakagawa patent may disclose the general concept of compressing image data before it is stored in memory, it is respectfully submitted that it does not disclose the particular approach to the compression of image data that is recited in claim 18. More particularly, the claim now recites that one method of data compression is selected from among a plurality of compression methods which have mutually different compression speeds, in accordance with the number of image taking operations being performed. For example, with reference to the embodiment illustrated in Figure 21, a determination is made whether the number of image taking operations, C, falls within certain ranges. If the number of operations is greater than 2, but less than 5, a differential data compression method is selected. If the number of image taking operations is greater than 4, a JPEG operation is selected. As

disclosed in the specification at page 49, the differential data compression method has a fast processing speed, whereas the JPEG compression method has a slower processing speed.

It is respectfully submitted that the Nakagawa patent does not disclose the selection of different compression *methods* in accordance with the number of images being taken. Rather, the cited portion of the patent, column 17, line 67 to column 18, line 6, only refers to the "amount of code data," which would appear to correspond to a compression ratio. It does not disclose selection of one of a plurality of compression methods, particularly methods having different respective compression speeds.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of claim 18 is not suggested by the applied references, even if their teachings are considered in combination.

Claims 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 on the basis of the newly-cited Suzuki patent (U.S. 5,517,246). The Suzuki patent is concerned with the compression of moving-picture information, and more particularly the selection of an appropriate compression method in accordance with the amount of activity from frame to frame. See, for example, column 1, lines 22-29.

In contrast, claims 19 and 20 are directed to a camera system in which a plurality of images of a scene are composited into a single image. In this type of system, there is no "activity" between the individual images of the composite that would dictate different types of compression methods. To clarify this distinction, claim 19 now explicitly recites that the plural images are composited into a single image, as opposed to the sequence of images that provide animation in the context

of the Suzuki patent. Furthermore, claim 19 now recites that the controller selects a compression ratio and/or a method of data compression, for the plurality of images except the standard image, corresponding to a condition that exists when the image data is taken. As further recited in claim 20, this condition comprises at least one of the luminance of the object, the number of image taking operations, a region from which the image data is read out, and/or a time period from a standard time to the time of taking the image. Each of these various conditions relates to the amount of storage capacity that is required. For example, if the luminance of an object decreases, the number of images to be taken increases, and therefore an enlarged storage capacity is required. To compensate for this condition, a higher compression ratio is employed.

Similarly, for each of the other stated conditions, the amount of storage capacity can be affected. In particular, the required storage capacity will become greater if the number of image taking operations increases, or the size of the region from which image data is read increases, or the time for taking the image increases. Under each of these situations, a higher compression ratio is employed, to reduce the amount of data to be stored, and thereby lessen the storage requirements.

It is respectfully submitted that the Suzuki patent does not disclose, nor otherwise suggest, the claimed subject matter. In particular, its disclosure relating to the selection of a compression method in accordance with the amount of activity in moving pictures does not bear any relationship to a still-image camera system in which a plurality of images are composited to form a single image. Furthermore, it does not disclose the selection of a compression ratio, or a data compression method, in accordance with the particular conditions that are recited in claim 20.


For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 18-20 are patentably distinct from the cited references, in addition to claims 4, 5 and 28-30.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections, and allowance of all pending claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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